

Hitt's Hill Meeting #2 Summary

Tuesday, March 18, 2003, Rainier Valley Cultural Center 7p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

The following is a summary of the second and final community meeting for the Hitt's Hill Natural Area. The first meeting on 11/19/02 informed the community about planned park improvements and helped the community come to a consensus on desired park activities and vegetative character.

Parks Planner Cathy Tuttle reviewed the Parks naming process. A park can be named for its "geographical location, historical or cultural significance, and natural or geological features. A park may be named for a person no longer living (deceased a minimum of three years) who made a significant contribution to parks and/or recreation." Possible names for this new park should be submitted by April 1 to Paula.hoff@seattle.gov Park Naming Committee, 100 Dexter N, Seattle, WA 98109.

Police Officer Mark Solomon spoke about Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. Officer Solomon could see the site had a history of illegal dumping. Some recommendations:

- Maintain line of sight and ability to assess what is ahead and behind
- No dead ends
- Remove possible hidey holes
- Natural barriers of thorny plants like thistle or roses and open chain link fence
- Lighting can aid safety for private homes
- Continue park activity and neighborhood involvement

Parks Landscape Architect Karen Galt reviewed the draft Vegetative Management Report. The report is available for review at the SE Neighborhood Service Center, the Columbia Library and on the park website at <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/proparks/projects/hittshillVMP.pdf> Comments on the report should be addressed to Karen Galt or Cathy Tuttle by April 1. The purpose of the report is to:

- Evaluate the existing vegetation
- Provide a template of agreed upon goals for future plant management
- Provide tools for restoration of the park to a healthy condition

Cheryl Fraser, Parks Southeast Operations Manager, discussed Parks policy toward fences. Parks preference is for natural barriers. Fences are expensive and added only as a last resort.

Karen Galt reviewed the planned designs for the park. **Community comments** were generally positive for plan. One resident said, "It's amazing this park is happening and will be here for generations." Some of the concerns and questions included:

- **Will the large cottonwood tree be removed?** *The tree is unhealthy but it will remain in the short term. The tree will be monitored regularly by Parks staff until it is determined too risky to remain standing.*
- **Can the Friends of Hitt's Hill review the project budget?** *Copies of cost estimate will be sent to Friends of Hitt's Hill. The project budget will be revised as the design is developed.*

- **What can neighbors do to keep the park safe?** *Police Officer Mark Solomon says the most important action the neighbors can do is to take ownership of the park: “families need to use the park to discourage thugs.” Officer Solomon stressed that a park is safer when it looks cared for. For example, a paved, carefully landscaped entry will indicate you are entering a public park that is frequently used. Community members and Parks need to work quickly to remove signs of illegal dumping.*
- **What should neighbors do if they notice illegal activity in the new park?** *First, call 911. If there are clean-ups needed of debris, graffiti and the like, call Parks maintenance staff.*
- **Can Parks address water seeping on 39th Ave. S?** *There is a neighborhood problem with drainage on 39th. Parks can try a low impact and relatively inexpensive French drain in the parking strip adjacent to the park to try to redirect water from crossing the sidewalk.*
- **Why pave the entries instead of making them crushed rock like the interior paths?** *There are two reasons. First, a paved entry is a visual cue for people entering and leaving the park that an entry zone has been crossed. Second, entries take the most foot traffic and degrade quickly unless they are paved. Crushed gravel cannot be easily maintained: it requires ongoing pothole filling. Also, it is difficult to keep loose gravel from washing out from a sloped area, making the surrounding streets and sidewalks potentially slippery surfaces.*
- **Why is there any entry on Brandon?** *Multiple entries into the park make it safer. The Brandon entry also allows for an accessible entry to the park interior which is required by law.*
- **What kind of signs will be put into the park?** *Interpretive signs choices were discussed at the meeting. The community preferred simple, low impact signs made of “natural” materials.*
- **Can less money be spent on sidewalks and concrete?** *Sidewalk replacement might be funded with other neighborhood funds that the Friends of Hitt’s Hill can apply for.*
- **Will all of the park be constructed with the Pro Parks Opportunity Funds?** *Most of the \$100,000 awarded by the Pro Parks Opportunity Fund will be spent on infrastructure costs such as entries, park signs, trails, limited plantings, drainage and irrigation. This is a property that will require more than \$100,000 to address future vegetation needs.*
- **Why can’t more money be spent to plant big trees?** *Generally, planting smaller caliper trees works best in a natural area. And it is essential to develop the park infrastructure – such as access and a water source – first to help support forest restoration activities. Because water will be available, it may be possible to plant larger trees, but they will require a greater watering commitment by volunteers to establish.*
- **Can Parks indicate where the viewpoints might be added for later development?** *Yes. The spaces for them will be laid out as part of the constructed elements.*
- **Why do we need a Vegetative Management Report?** *The long-term goal for the park is to create a healthy vegetative state that is self-sustaining and has little need for human intervention. Western Hemlock/Douglas Fir forest is the natural tendency of the site. However, the community appreciates the unique deciduous quality of the forest and the park will be maintained primarily in this state. This report directs future forest development for both Parks staff and community volunteers.*
- **How can volunteers use the Vegetative Management Report?** *When Parks or the Friends of Hitt’s Hill decide to add additional vegetation they can refer to the report for plant types and approximate amounts needed for the area they plan to cover. The report will also describe best practices for planting and guide work party activities supervised by trained*

plant restoration staff. The report details what work can best be done by Parks staff and hired specialists, and what work can be done through community work parties. No volunteer work will be allowed in steep slope areas.

- **Are the plants listed in the Vegetative Management Report all that can be planted?** *No, any plant that fits the criteria for native deciduous or coniferous forest can be added to the site. Plants not on the lists should be reviewed with Parks staff – either the District Gardener, Landscape Architect or Forestry staff – prior to purchase or planting on site.*

Next steps

A name will be selected for the park in April 2003. Parks will develop construction drawings to guide park construction. Construction of the Pro Parks Opportunity Fund project will be completed in the fall of 2003.

Contact information:

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